



# MECMOAA CHAPTER NEWS



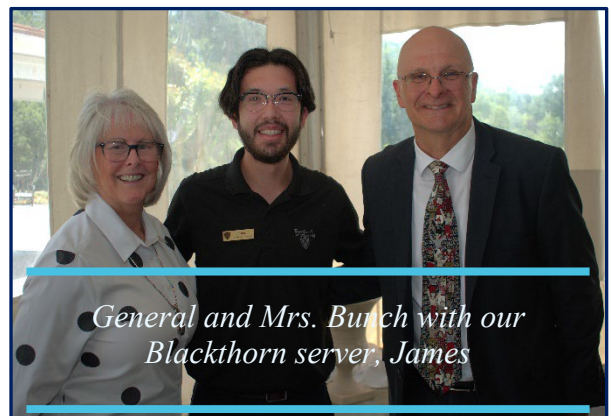
## Our Chapter President

### Don Thompson, Col, USAF (Ret.)



Thanks to all of you who were able to attend our meeting at The Ridges on May 18, 2025. We were able to present two \$1,000 scholarships to two ROTC cadets and three \$500 awards to three graduating JROTC cadets. Thanks for your generosity in supporting the scholarship program. Two of the scholarships were funded by the Herb Ladley donations; the others came from our MECMOAA scholarship fund. It is now time to replenish this fund so we can continue with this support of ROTC and JROTC programs!

General (retired) Arnie Bunch gave a great presentation where he emphasized how important it is for organizations such as ours to advocate to young people to consider the military as an option once they graduate from high school. He mentioned a new position in Knox County where the county school system has created a position of Director of Military Enlistment. This is a novel position, and appears to be the first of its kind in Tennessee.



*General and Mrs. Bunch with our  
Blackthorn server, James*

Knox County is a little bigger than any of our communities in Northeast Tennessee, but an opportunity exists for us to advocate to our local County Commissioners, City Councils, and School Boards to support such a position. The Knox County Schools already have a Director of Enrollment to help high school students prepare for post-high school training in college or technical schools, a Director of Employment to help high school students prepare to enter the work force after graduation, and now they have a new Director of Military Enlistment who will not only encourage more high school students to join their local JROTC program, but will also help in determining what kind of military service might fit them best – enlistment, service academy, or ROTC scholarship at the university level. Please stand by for more information. Once we are ready to go public on this effort, we will ask you to contact your local City Council or County Commission representative to support this effort.



### **Revitalization of the East Tennessee Chapter in Knoxville**

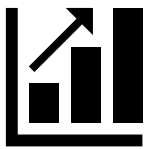
John Rice and I attended the revitalization meeting in Knoxville March 1, 2025. Under the leadership of Pete Warner, the President of the Tennessee Council of Chapters, with strong support from Frank Michael, the Director of MOAA National Affiliated Councils and Chapters, a revitalized Chapter formed, elected officers, and immediately had about 45 people join. The new president is Doug Goins. If you know any current or potential MOAA member in or around Knoxville, please refer them to Doug. His email is [goinsdouglas@gmail.com](mailto:goinsdouglas@gmail.com) and his cell number is 703-772-6736. Yes, the new Knox County Director of Military Enlistment is joining MOAA National and the Knoxville Chapter!

## **Veterans Treatment Court**

I have allowed our progress on Veterans Treatment Courts to fall by the wayside the past few months as we have focused on other issues. I will be reengaging with our Sullivan County judges in coming months to get this effort moving again.

Please continue to invite your friends and contacts to our bimonthly meetings at the Ridges! You are the best advocate for new members, so please keep it up.

*Thanks for kicking off this newsletter, Don!*



## **Speaking of continued membership growth...**

We added three members in the first five months of 2025, starting our third straight year of solid membership growth! As before, this is because of YOU, as you invited prospective members to our gatherings, and when they came, YOU were there to make them feel welcome. Let's keep doing this!

Membership dues remain \$20 per year, and Surviving Spouses never pay dues. A lifetime membership is available at \$250.

**Keep reading for introductions of our newest members!**

## New Member Spotlights



### **John A. Sampson, LCDR, USN (Ret.)**

John and Leslie Sampson moved to Gray, Tennessee, in September, 2022, from San Diego, California. John served in the US Navy for almost 29 years, retiring as a Lieutenant Commander in 2002.

John was born in Butte, Montana, and was raised in the Flathead Valley. He joined the Navy on the delayed entry program while in high school. He chose the nuclear power program, and completed Phases 1-4 of Electronics Technician “A” School (Radar). He then served on USS Lynde McCormick (DDG 8) in OE Division prior to nuclear training. John attended nuclear power school at Mare Island and the S5G prototype in Idaho.

John volunteered for submarine duty; his first submarine (boat) was USS Barb (SSN 596) out of San Diego where he completed qualifications as a Reactor Operator and Submarines. John completed three WestPac cruises and participated in the first-ever submarine-launched Tomahawk missile test.

John was then assigned to USS Dace (SSN 607) in Mare Island Naval shipyard, qualifying the senior enlisted watchstation and coordinating all shipyard engineering work. Afterward, John went to the USS William H Bates (SSN 680) in San Diego, where he ran the boat’s qualification program and coordinated all the ship’s maintenance, internal and external. He completed two WestPac cruises and was selected for Chief Petty Officer (E-7).

John taught nuclear operations at the A1W (aircraft carrier) prototype, a 2-reactor configuration. John qualified as a Staff Engineering Officer of the Watch (EOOW) and was the first to receive a dual plant final evaluated watch by Naval Reactors. He was a Leading Crew Chief until chosen as the Plant Leading Reactor Operator. John was ranked #1 Chief Petty Officer at A1W and #1 Chief Electronics Technician at the Naval Reactor's site, culminating in his selection to Senior Chief Petty Officer at 11 years. He was selected as a Limited Duty Officer (LDO) in the field of nuclear operations. John was personally screened by the director of Naval Reactors (ADM Kinnard McKee) and selected for naval reactors field work.

After commissioning, John returned to sea on USS Truxtun (CGN 35) in San Diego as the Engineering Technician, coordinating all the ship's maintenance. He completed all officer qualifications and qualified for command, subsequently promoted through to Lieutenant.

In his next assignment at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, John directed the first nuclear surface ship refueling in 17 years on USS California (CGN 36), backfitting new design reactor cores. John directed numerous several key dry-docking evolutions including the first 4 active SSBNs in-the-same-dock on the-same-tide, and USS Missouri (BB 63). John's next tour was Assistant Engineer Officer on USS California where he ran all the ship's maintenance, and was the Sea and Anchor Detail Officer of the Deck. John qualified and stood Tactical Action Officer during battlegroup operations.

Assigned as Staff Material Officer at Commander, Submarine Development Group ONE (COMSUBDEVGRUONE), John provided engineering oversight for

submarine rescue, deep ocean research, diving development, manned and unmanned vehicles, and special mission submarines Parche (SSN 683) and Dolphin (AGSS 555). He was then assigned as Reactor Maintenance Officer on USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) where he coordinated all engineering maintenance and all ship's work by the shipyard. John returned to COMSUBDEVGRUONE as the Squadron Engineer modernizing equipment for manned and unmanned vehicles for future capabilities. This included the at-sea rescue of the USS Dolphin which had been abandoned at-sea after flooding and fire.

After military retirement, John supported submarine ESM for SERCO and Deep Submergence Program work for Portsmouth Naval Shipyard until selected as a remote government official supporting submarine rescue system development. He was chosen by Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center (SPAWAR) to return USS Dolphin to service and support undersea developments; numerous designs were developed for use in present day submarines. John shifted to the civilian sector as a VP for BAE, responsible for coatings application and removal, and toxic metal abatement in shipyards, bridges and structures nationwide. John returned to SPAWAR headquarters supporting PEO C4ISR applications in all mission areas, and as a Program Director and Program Manager in classified developments. He shifted his focus to maritime surveillance in global applications at all classification levels. John closed his second career supporting the Shore and Expeditionary Integration Program Office at PEO C4ISR. John is





in his third career, in Retail, and runs Electrical/Lighting and Plumbing departments at the Jonesborough Lowes.

John has been married to Leslie (Kenoyer) Sampson for almost 19 years. Leslie retired from a career for the Department of the Navy at Space and Naval Warfare Systems (SPAWAR) in the Contracts department, supporting contract closeouts and patents. Leslie was a contractor for Electric Boat drafting maintenance packages for Trident ballistic missile submarines at Bangor Washington, and she was on the Delta Pier when the first Trident submarine arrived at Bangor, USS Ohio (SSBN 626). Leslie also served as a budget analyst for the General Services Administration Pacific Region in Seattle Washington.

John and Leslie have two Scottish Terriers and are active in local politics and their church.

*We're glad you surfaced here with us, John and Leslie!*

### **James D. Paffenroth, CDR, USN (Ret.)**



Jim is a native of Pine Island, New York. He attended Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia, earning a Bachelor's of Science degree in Geological Sciences and was commissioned through the Navy Reserve Officers Training Corps Program in 2000.

Following graduation from Surface Warfare Officers School in Newport, Rhode Island, Jim embarked on two subsequent sea assignments, first onboard USS O'Bannon (DD 987) as the Damage Control Assistant, followed by USS Nitze (DDG 94) as the

Fire Control Officer. He next served as an Officer Recruiter at NRD Nashville, followed by a deployment to Iraq as a member of Joint CREW Composite Squadron-One, supporting Improvised Explosive Device suppression operations. While in Iraq, he was assigned to the 526 Brigade Support Battalion, 101st Airborne Division and the 210 Brigade Support Battalion, 10th Mountain Division.

In 2008, Jim laterally transferred to the Human Resources Community and subsequently served as the Executive Officer of Naval Technical Training Center, Meridian, Mississippi. His following assignments were at Naval Personnel Command, Millington, Tennessee, as the Allocation and Statistics Branch Head and at Field Support Activity, Washington Navy Yard, as the Deputy Director and Head of the Manpower and Administrative Departments. In 2017, he reported to Officer Training Command in Newport as the Director of Officer Candidate School, followed by a tour as the Executive Officer. Jim's final assignment on active duty was at United States Naval Academy as the Military Personnel Officer. Commander Paffenroth retired on March 1, 2024, following 23 years of honorable service.

Jim holds a Master of Science in Management from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, and a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College in Newport. His personal awards include the Meritorious Service Medal (3), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (3), the Army Commendation Medal, and numerous other unit, service, and campaign awards.



Jim is married to Dr. Melissa Paffenroth, who hails from Plympton, Massachusetts. They have one daughter, Adelaide, and reside in Telford.

*Welcome aboard, Jim and Melissa!*

### **Tom Farrow, LT, USN**

Tom Farrow graduated from Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, with a BS in Criminal Justice. He served as a Deputy Sheriff in Seminole County from 1977 to 1980 before joining the US Navy, serving until 1987 and separating as a Lieutenant. Here's a brief summary of Tom's military career:

Commissioned through OCS in November, 1980

1981 UDT/SEAL School Coronado (Buds), injured

1982 Recuperation duty Naval Station Hawaii Asst. Brig Officer

Sea Duty from 1982 to 1987:

USS Morton DD-948

USS Wichita AOR-1

USS Mobile Bay CG-53

Following Tom's military career, he served as a Special Agent in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), from 1987 through 2008. Since that time, he has been Co-Owner of T. E Farrow & Associates, Private Investigations. Tom is married to Sandy Farrow, the other Co-Owner of T. E. Farrow & Associates. Sandy also retired from the FBI!

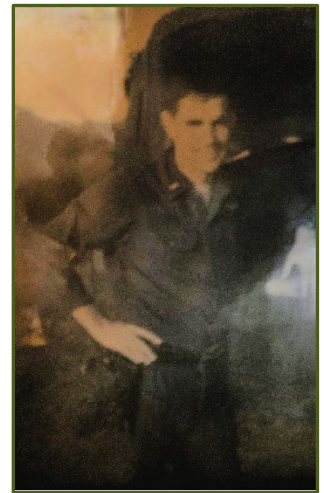
*Wow! Welcome to MECMOAA, Tom & Sandy!*

## Henry H. Brant, CPT, USA



Henry Brant served in the US Army as a helicopter pilot from October 1965 to September 1968. He grew up in Bristol, Virginia, and graduated from Virginia High School in 1961, followed by Virginia Military Institute in Lexington. Henry was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in Armor in June 1965. He also married Diana D. "D.D." Burke in September of that year. Henry attended Armor Officer Basic Course at Ft Knox, Kentucky, Primary Helicopter School at Ft Wolters, and then to Advanced Helicopter School Ft Rucker, Alabama.

Henry served in Viet Nam with the 174th Assault Helicopter Company from November 1966 to November 1967. The 174th was stationed at Lane Army Air Field near Nha Trang, with various short-term deployments at Tuy Hoa and Duc Phu, to name a couple. Henry was awarded the Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal, Army Air Medal with 25 OLC, Army Aviation Badge, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal.



After Viet Nam, Henry was stationed at Hunter Army Air Field as a Helicopter Instrument Flight Instructor, logging over 1900 hours flight time.

He returned to civilian life in September, 1968, and entered the insurance industry. Henry retired in 2007 as President of Slempe, Brant, Saunders and Associates. an independent Insurance Agency in Marion, Virginia. Henry was

very active in community affairs and served in many leadership positions in the community, as well as the Episcopal Dioceses of Southwestern Virginia.

Henry and his wife (deceased May 16, 2022) have two daughters, five grandchildren, and one great granddaughter.

*We're glad to have you with us, Henry...and welcome home!*

## **Gary M. Onyett, Capt, USAF (Ret.)**

### **US Air Force Enlisted Experience**

- Accounting and Finance Military Pay Technician
- Selected for assignment to Air Force Accounting and Finance Center, Military Pay Directorate
  - Briefed Worldwide Air Force Accounting and Finance Conference
  - Briefed various VIPs, Grace Commission and other senior Air Force personnel
  - Nominated for 12 Outstanding Air Force Airmen
- Assigned to largest Air Force Accounting and Finance Office as Deputy Accounting and Finance Officer
- Managed a team of technicians processing military and travel cash and check payments for military assigned to the Military District of Washington
- Authorized to review, approve and sign single checks up to \$10 million each for Department of Defense expenditures

## **US Air Force Medical Service Corps (MSC)**

- **Director of Medical Resource Management**, San Vito Clinic, San Vito Air Station, Italy and USAF Hospital Edwards AFB, CA
  - Led the finance, resources, and staffing organizations
  - Created, maintained, and analyzed the budget and staffing for the entire organization
- **Squadron Section Commander/Director of Medical Logistics and Readiness/Director of Medical Resource Management** - San Vito Clinic, San Vito Air Station, Italy
- **Director of Medical Systems Acquisitions**, Wilford Hall USAF Medical Center, Lackland AFB, TX
  - Developed, managed, and analyzed the organization's budget and organization's staffing
  - Worked with contracting to develop and oversee all of the organization's IT-related contracts
- **Medical Information Systems Program Manager for Resources and Readiness**, HQ USAF Surgeon General's Office, US Air Force Medical Support Agency - Brooks AFB, TX
  - Managed and led projects for IT, resources, readiness, and personnel-related programs and projects
  - Managed budget, prioritization, system development, deployment, and training issues for a number of major DoD and Air Force medical information systems installed worldwide

- Served as Air Force deputy program manager for the Composite Health Care System (CHCS)

## **Civilian Experience**

- **Information Planning Manager/Advanced Business Analyst** – Electronic Data Systems (EDS)
- **Dell Client Program Manager** - Alternative Resources Corporation (ARC), Dell Project Office
- **Information Development Manager** - Dell Computers
- **Project Director** - COVANSYS
- **Texas Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Operations Project Manager** - MAXIMUS
- **Project Manager III** - Envolv PeopleCare (EPC)

**Retired** - February 1997

## **Achievements**

- Numerous Air Force enlisted awards - Airman of the Quarter; NCO of the Quarter; NCO of the Year; nominated for Air Force 12 Outstanding Airmen, Stripes to Exceptional Performers (STEP) (E5 to E6)
- Requested to brief a variety of conferences and visiting VIPS and Congressional staff on Air Force Finance topics
- Requested by name for several positions - Air Force Accounting and Finance Center Military Pay Technician; Director of Medical Resource Management; Director of Medical Systems Acquisition; Director of Medical Systems Acquisition; Medical Information Systems Program Manager for Resources and Readiness

- Selected by Air Force Medical Service Corps (MSC) and promoted to Second Lieutenant
- Bachelor of Science Cum Laude, University of Maryland, University College
- Selected/served in 1994 as the Lackland AFB Military Ambassador to Fiesta San Antonio and surrounding areas
- Selected to accompany Czech Republic Military Surgeon General and staff on official visit to San Antonio

### **Moved from central Texas to northeast Tennessee in 2023**

- Reside in Piney Flats with wife Valerie and two Brussels Griffon dogs
- Volunteer at James H. Quillen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Voluntary Services office
- Enjoy:
  - Meeting new people
  - Traveling, Cruises
  - Museums/Historical sites
  - Wineries and distilleries
  - Finding new restaurants

*Gary & Valerie, we're glad you settled here with us!*



## Kevin M. Selhorst, CWO4, USN (Ret.)



Kevin was born in Coldwater, Ohio, and joined the Navy in 1993. He served for over 30 years as an Aviation Ordnanceman, going from the rank of E-1 to W-4.

Kevin retired out of Norfolk, Virginia, and moved to the Tri-Cities area to become a Senior Naval Science Instructor NJROTC at David Crockett High School in Jonesborough. He lives in Kingsport with his wife Michelle and their daughter Alyssa. They also have two fur-babies, Sundae and Rocky. They enjoy doing trail walks, serving in ministry and watching TV series.

*We're excited to bring you on board, Kevin & Michelle!*

## Recognizing our Outstanding JROTC & ROTC Cadets

Each May, multiple Chapter members raise their hands to ensure we visit every local JROTC program at their awards ceremonies. We present a **MOAA JROTC Award** certificate to one cadet from each program, chosen by their respective leaders. It's a huge but vitally important effort, coordinated each year by LTC Ed Champion, USA (Ret.), who has led this initiative for more years than we can count. Ed also presents the **MOAA ROTC Award** at East Tennessee State University.







We also present monetary awards of \$500 each to an even more selective number of JROTC cadets (three this year), and \$1,000 each to two ROTC cadets enrolled under East Tennessee State University's ARMY ROTC program. Thanks to your generous monetary support each year, we have expanded these awards over the last three years. Dr. Herb Ladley, Jr., also gave a \$25,000 donation to ensure the longevity of the award named in honor of his late father, CAPT Herb Ladley, USN (Ret.). Here's a look at our future community and military leaders receiving their awards at our May membership brunch.



Gen Arnie Bunch, USAF (Ret.) presents the MECMOAA Award to Cadet Brayden Driver from Morristown-Hamblen Air Force JROTC



(Above) Gen Arnie Bunch, USAF (Ret.) and MECMOAA President, Col Don Thompson, present the MECMOAA Award to Cadet Brooklyn Zeigler, Daniel Boone High School Marine Corps JROTC

(Below) Cadet Zeigler and her family







(Left) LCDR John Rice, USN (Ret.) speaks about his friend and fellow Naval Aviator CAPT Herb Ladley, the namesake of the Herb Ladley Award.

(Below) John and Dr. Herb Ladley, Jr. present the Herb Ladley Award to Cadet Anais Rodriguez from Volunteer High School Naval JROTC





Cadet William Hayes from ETSU Army ROTC received the Herb Ladley Scholarship.  
Pictured (Left to Right) are LTC Jared Powell (ETSU Professor of Military Science), LCDR (Ret.) John Rice, Cadet Hayes, and Dr. Herb Ladley, Jr.



Cadet Christopher Beckman from ETSU Army ROTC received the MECMOAA Scholarship.  
Pictured (Left to Right) are Gen (Ret.) Arnie Bunch, LTC Jared Powell, Cadet Beckman, and Col (Ret.) Don Thompson.



At our May brunch, we not only recognized our upcoming community and military leaders, but we gave a round of applause and “*Welcome Home*” to our MECMOAA members who served either in-theater or elsewhere during the Vietnam War. 2025 marks the **50th Anniversary of the official end of the Vietnam War.**



Pictured (left to right): Brig Gen Bill Richardson, USAF; COL Jack Woolley, USA; LCDR Tom Shafer, USN; LCDR John Rice, USN; CPT Jack Butterworth, USA; LTC Mary Ward, USA; LTC Ed Champion, USA; and Maj Keith Thompson, USMC.

*Thank you all—you have Never Stopped Serving.*



## 2025 Membership Brunch & Meetings



Mark Tipton, Maj, USAF (Ret.)

We meet at Blackthorn Club in The Ridges on a bi-monthly schedule.

Cost is \$35 per person at the door.

- You'll receive an email requesting RSVP approximately two weeks prior
- Begin gathering at 1230, opening remarks at 1300, followed by brunch

**Mark your calendars for all of our remaining meetings!**



**July 20**  
**September 21**  
**November 16**  
**Annual Business Meeting**

Note: Nametags are funded for members and spouses through membership dues. Once you pay you first-year dues, we'll order you and your spouse a new nametag. *If you haven't received yours, please email us!*

***Do you know of someone who would be a good guest speaker,  
maybe even yourself?***

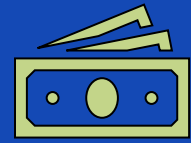
Just let us know by emailing [mecmoaa@gmail.com](mailto:mecmoaa@gmail.com)!

**We'll see you at brunch on **July 20th**!**



## Treasurer's Corner

Brett Monette, MAJ, USA (Ret.)



I am very excited to report on the state of the treasury for this year! **Our total accounts available have an astounding total of \$38,030.49.** Although we were very healthy funding our program for the last reporting period, this year had a very big surprise from one of our own MECMOAA honorary members, **Dr. Herb Ladley Jr.** I am certain that the generous donations from the Ladley family will ensure the Mountain Empire Chapter can achieve its goals for many years to come. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Currently, the **Eastman Credit Union** accounts have a total of \$30,733.50. The accounts break down with \$3,814.49 available in our business operating account, \$24,497.74 in the Herb Ladley Fund, \$2,386.67 in the MECMOAA Scholarship fund, and \$34.60 in an interest account.

In addition to our Eastman Credit Union accounts we also have an investment account with **Edward Jones** currently worth \$7,296.99. This is a reduction of the total from last year's \$9,743.80 due to the withdrawal of a 6-month CD that matured and was re-deposited to our Business Checking at the end of last year. We are currently looking into additional investment options and will brief the Chapter on any additional changes to our funding status.

Again, we thank each one of you who have donated for the Scholarship awards in the past. It is important to note that the MECMOAA Awards we present every year are donations from our members and are matched by the Herb Ladley Scholarship Fund. We will always accept donations throughout the

year from our members. If you still wish to contribute to the Scholarship/Award program for our chapter, **try out our new and improved website for digital donation options by clicking the link below.** This is the same as our new website, but anyone can donate without logging in.

## [Donate Here](#)

We hope you had a great Memorial Day and an opportunity to reflect on the ultimate sacrifices too many great men and woman have made to ensure our nation survives. God Bless.



### Legislative Update

John Lyle, Col, USAF (Ret.)



**Caveat:** As we obtain John's legislative update and merge it with all the other topics of relevance, the current status of legislation may change. We should collectively discuss these issues, but we must also individually be "tuned in" to what's happening real-time regarding programs and initiatives that we care about. We must also act in a timely manner to engage our elected representatives so we don't miss our best opportunities. You can do that easily through **MOAA's Legislative Action Center**.

Just click **[HERE](#)** to stay informed and take action, and be sure to subscribe to the legislative updates so you are informed as needed.

(Note: This link is also on our new MECMOAA website.)

**Update on topics presented at May 18 Chapter & Apr 25 Board Meetings**

**1. CAUTION:** POTUS Trump's DOGE continues cost cutting efforts which may result in risk to DoD and VA budgets. For the second year, the CBO report targets VA disability payment tax-free status and payments based on income, as well as Tricare For Life fees. MOAA's position is unchanged: "We remain focused on our core mission to protect and preserve veterans past & present benefits, to maintain strong defense budget to reduce impacts on retention & recruitment and readiness. See savings through acquisition reform and efficient program management."

**SUGGESTED ACTION:** Individually register as advocates on the Legislative Action Center (LAC) using the link above and actively engage congressional representatives. Help ensure the proposed \$1T DoD budget goes to right priorities.

**2. MOAA's 119th Congress Legislative Priorities** (source: MOAA Magazine & Newsletter & LAC) **Activity heating up...MOAA attended Joint Hearing on Feb 26 to address:**

Currently Serving: S.5520/HR 10342: housing oversight bill to address health, safety, accountability, detailed financial reporting, improved tenant protections, medical care for illnesses caused by poor housing conditions; bipartisan bill introduced to restore 100% BAH; 25 NDAA & CR increased junior enlisted pay 10% on 1 Apr 25 added to 4.5% in Jan 25; bill to protect USCG members < 20 years service but >18 like rest of DoD.

Retirees/veterans: End wait period for toxic-exposed veterans; a more perfect PACT ACT.



*Family/Survivors:* Reduce high spouse unemployment rates by incentivizing businesses to hire spouses despite short tenures of 2-3 years by passing Military Spouse Hiring Act; return to work orders impacting spouses child care

*DoD Health Care:* Improve Military Health System (MHS) to deliver more timely care by implementing a digital MHS platform to report & address challenges; (Note on 31 Jan, Rep McCormick (R-GA) introduced HR 873 to amend Title 10, USC, to modify Tricare rates of pay based on location of procedure; Tricare now covers monoclonal antibodies (MABs) lecanemab (brand name Leqembi) and donanemab (brand name Kisunla) for Alzheimer for up to 5 years previously approved by Medicare but rejected by TFL.

*VA Health Care:* Improve veterans home care-giving and long-term care: S.879, The Veteran Caregiver Reeducation, Reemployment, and Retirement Act, reintroduced on 6 Mar; support 14.3M mil & vet caregivers, 74% caring for vets > 60 years old.

*Persistent Efforts:* Fair COLA, Arlington National Cemetery access, pay increases, TRICARE or pharmacy fee increases that exceed military/retiree pay, new Major Richard Star Act legislation coming soon: concurrent receipt for combat-injured veterans increases, stop unequal decrements to compensation and benefits based on rank, age, family composition, retirement status, or disability benefits.

**3. MECMOAA should host a Chapter meeting with US, state, and local representatives** to discuss legislative issues, such as the Tennessee legislature's failure to support HB0436/SB0651, 100% veteran property tax reimbursement.



It seems much easier to stay current on federal legislative priorities that it does on local and state issues. The Tennessee Council of Chapters is “plugged in” to **TNVETS**, our state’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan veterans service organization. You can learn more by clicking this [LINK](#) to their website.

Please respond to the email you’ll receive shortly from our Chapter Gmail account asking for topics of interest/concern at the local and state levels—we’ll use your feedback to shape our invitations to these representatives.

As organizations exempt from federal taxation under Sec. 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code, MOAA and its affiliates must take care to avoid engaging in partisan political activities. Under IRS rules, we are prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.

## **Are you a MOAA National Member?**

If not, why?

Just **click the following link** to see MOAA membership options,  
from Basic (free) to Lifetime:

**[Join MOAA](#)**

## ***We did it!***

Because of your continued efforts to make the Mountain Empire Chapter and our communities great, MOAA recognized us with the

### **5-star Levels of Excellence Award**

for 2024! This award honors Councils and Chapters for their efforts across the full scope of MOAA's mission.

We also garnered **5-star** recognition for this **newsletter** and our **website** through the **Colonel Marvin J. Harris Communications Award**.



## Now, about our new website...

If you haven't logged into our new website, please do so at your earliest opportunity. You should have an email with instructions from our Chapter email address. Here's the content from that email:

Go to this link: <https://mecmoaa.org/Our-New-Website>

It should look like this. Click on "click here." Please use the email you're using to receive this message to establish your new login.



If you have any problems, please send me an email so I can troubleshoot. Once you're in, please ensure your personal information is correct, and you may pay your 2025 dues on the website if you haven't already.

Thanks for your patience with this website launch. There will be more to follow after we get everyone's login established—the new site will be our primary method of membership and meeting administration, while leveling-up our communication with all of you.

We hope you enjoyed this newsletter.

Please send any comments or suggestions to [mecmoaa@gmail.com](mailto:mecmoaa@gmail.com).

## ***Never Stop Serving.***

Mountain Empire Chapter (MECMOAA) is an affiliate of the  
Military Officers Association of America

Mailing Address: PO Box 5024, Johnson City, TN 37602-5024

Email: [mecmoaa@gmail.com](mailto:mecmoaa@gmail.com)

Website: <https://mecmoaa.org>

(Webmaster - Stan Gedelman)